

Butterflies in Scandinavia, 1969

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Short visits to Abisko in Swedish Lapland in 1960 and 1964 produced a number of the interesting Arctic butterflies and inspired in me a desire to penetrate further into the wilderness to obtain the rarer species which live still further north.

I therefore planned a trip to Finnish Lapland with Kilpisjarvi and Karigasniemi as the main destinations. Both these hamlets lie on the Finnish-Norwegian frontier on the roads out of Finland which terminate respectively at Tromsö and Hammerfest.

My wife and I left England in a Dormobile Land Rover by the Immingham-Göteborg ferry, landing in Sweden on 16th June after a very good 26 hour crossing of the North Sea.

We planned to motor up Sweden to Rovaniemi, the capital of Finnish Lapland hoping to get a few butterflies en route. In particular we heard that *Coenonympha hero* L., *Lycaena helle* Schiff. and *Carterocephalus silvicola* Meigen. were to be obtained near Lake Siljan in Central Sweden.

On 17th June en route for Örebro we stopped for lunch at a small forest clearing recently replanted. Here were a few common butterflies, *Mellicta athalia* Rott., *Clossiana euphrosyne* L., and *Pararge petropolitana* Fabr. My wife produced a small butterfly in a box and said "Is this any use?" It was a very fresh *Coenonympha hero* L. which she had caught round a small clump of birch and willow! Further search of the clump produced one more. Next day between Örebro and Leksand on Lake Siljan we stopped in an open area of the forest by a small stream bordered with birch and willow. Almost immediately we came again on *hero* and found quite a number, again in very fresh condition. After arrival at our hotel at Leksand we went out again and about two miles north on the Rättvik road found a bushy and flowery clearing where *hero* was really numerous. We also took here a single rather worn female *helle*, but failed to find *silvicola*. *C. hero* seems to be quite widespread in this part of Sweden as on our only three casual stops we found it.

A short stop by a moss between Sundsvall and Umeå on 20th June produced an example of *Coenonympha tullia* Müll. much like the Scots form. Otherwise we saw little else of interest until we had crossed into Finland at Haparanda. The weather was perfect, roads were mostly good, but the journey was rather monotonous. There were endless vistas of pine and spruce enlivened occasionally by animal warning signs depicting a large elk. Needless to say no elk were seen.

On 22nd June we stopped 44 miles south of Rovaniemi to investigate a small moss bordered by a strip of birch and small spruce. No sooner had we entered the strip than a large black butterfly got up—*Erebia embla* Thunbg. The moss was rough going with many holes, and *embla* was by no means easy to catch, but we got a few, including two females before the disappearance of the sun put an end to sport. The butterflies were in fair, but not absolutely fresh condition.

We were due to stay at Rovaniemi for three nights and had been told of a locality for both *embla* and *Oeneis jutta* Hübn. on the outskirts of the town. This we failed to find, so returned to our locality of 22nd June where we got a few more *embla*. A few miles nearer Rovaniemi we found a large moss with a strip of small trees and bushes, and here again *embla*

was flying. We finally made up a reasonable series after discarding a number of worn specimens.

June 24 was overcast. We found a small bog on the outskirts of Rovaniemi corresponding to the locality of which we had been told, but on visiting it in sunshine next morning, there were no butterflies and only a duck wigeon with a family. We went to Kilpisjarvi where we arrived at the comfortable Tourist hotel on the lake (jarvi=lake in Finnish). It is a few miles from the Norwegian frontier on the road to Tromsö. It is dominated by a 3000 ft. hill, Saana, just east of the road. This hill is the best butterfly ground with *Clossiana chariclea* Scheven, as the main prize. The foot of Saana is a birch zone, mosquito infested, which has to be got through before reaching the butterfly ground. A path goes up from just beyond the petrol station about one mile north west of the hotel, elsewhere the going is distinctly rough.

Our stay 26th June-6th July was rather handicapped by lack of sun. On two days it was so overcast that it was not worth while going up the hill and on several other occasions the day had a distressing tendency to cloud over just as we had struggled up through the birches. The birch zone contained no butterflies except an occasional *Erebia pandrose* Borkh. in the more open spaces. The north west slopes of Saana, to which the path leads, were crossed by occasional *Colias nastes* Bdv. and we secured a very fresh male and female which stopped to investigate a flower on 2nd July. A few fresh *Oeneis norna* Thunbg. were found in various places not very far above the birch line. Round the top of Saana on the south west side runs a low escarpment of rock. Below this on very steep ground we saw one or two foxy red small fritillaries, probably *Clossiana chariclea* but we failed to catch one. Here also we saw a single *Pyrgus andromedae* Wallgrn. We several times worked another area just above the birch, going up through it close to the hotel. Here on the edge of the birch we saw a few fritillaries, but only got three, one *Clossiana thore* Hübn. and two *Boloria napea* Hffmsg. *O. norna* was fairly common on the same ground, and we found one colony of *Vacciniina optilete* Knoch. fresh on 4th July.

Of birds, a pair of rough-legged buzzards was nesting near the top of Saana, we saw one snowy owl and a pair of bluethroats had eggs close to the hotel. We twice saw a cock Ryper close to the hotel, and a splendid collection of house martins were occupying a double row of nests low down just above the hotel door. They were very busy with the mosquitoes!

We left Kilpisjarvi on 6th July for Ivalo on the Rovaniemi-Karigasniemi road, arriving there on 8th July. The hotel was comfortable, but 84 miles from the hill Ailigas at Karigasniemi which we wanted to work for *Oeneis bore* Hübn. and *Clossiana polaris* Bdv. It was, however, the nearest place in which we could book accommodation from England. Luckily all but twelve miles of the road was very good. Ailigas is a rather isolated 2000 ft. hill with a wireless station on the top overlooking the Tana river and the Norwegian frontier. It is fairly easy of access by a path through the birch zone, the summit being about two miles from the road. The hill has a stony flattish top with fairly steep slopes crossed by many large stones in scree (or cairns as they would be called in Scotland). This is the main collecting ground for both *C. polaris* and *C. chariclea*. Luckily the stones are not too large, not slippery, and firmly anchored, so the cairns can be crossed with ease.

O. bore for the most part patronises the hilltop where I saw a dozen or more at once flying round one of the summit cairns.

We stayed at Ivalo until 14th July but on only two days was the weather good enough to justify starting on the long drive to the hill. Even on these two days the sun was only intermittent once we had got above the birch.

The first day, 10th July, we started ascending the cairns to the south east of the summit. Halfway up I saw a small foxy red fritillary flit past and settle on a patch of grass. I got my net over it and boxed it, and had the pleasure of seeing a completely new insect to me, with conspicuous large silver-white spots near the base of the underside hindwing — *C. chariclea*. Shortly afterwards we took *C. polaris*, also with a most distinctive underside. I made my way on to the top where *O. bore* was not uncommon but alert and not too easy to stalk. Frequently we had to suspend operations when clouds crossed the sun, but secured 9 *bore*, 2 *chariclea* and 3 *polaris* before descending.

On 12th July, a brilliant day at Ivalo we found the sun on Ailigas even more intermittent and after a good deal of work secured 5 *bore*, 1 *chariclea* and 3 *polaris*. One or two of the *polaris* were past their best. We had hoped to find *Erebia medusa polaris* Stdgr. in the birch zone where it had apparently been common in previous years, even along the roadside. We saw none; perhaps we were too late for it. On this day I saw a bird new to me in the birch, a Siberian jay.

What with unreliable sunshine, steep ground and difficulty of access, these rare Lapland butterflies take a great deal of work if a good series is to be secured, and probably several seasons are required. They go over quickly and their date of emergence is very dependent on weather. The mosquitoes are a curse, and an effective repellent must be used. The country is magnificent and a true wilderness. The road should not be left light-heartedly by those with no great experience of keeping direction in trackless wastes. Butterflies are not usually thick on the ground, but they make up for this by their interest and rarity compared with most European species. Only localities with easy access have been much collected. There must be many better ones which could only be reached by a proper expedition equipped with pack ponies and camping equipment. It is not an old man's country!

24.ix.1969.

LEUCANIA L-ALBUM L. IN THE WEST END OF LONDON.—On 28th October 1969, soon after mid-day, I was walking from Bond Street Station to Claridges. In Davies Street, a few yards from the hotel, I noticed a moth tucked into the angle of a window frame; I was able to capture it and can, therefore, confirm with certainty that it is *l-album* and is in excellent condition.

I do not know any record of this species being reported from near London. The moth is an active migrant, and perhaps the recent exceptional weather encouraged it to move northwards. Alternatively, it may have travelled from the south coast by Rolls Royce. However it reached Claridges, it was a pleasant appetiser to lunch.—J. A. C. GREENWOOD, The Thatches, Forest Road, Pyrford, Woking, Surrey. 29.x.1969.